

Dinosaur National Monument is completing a Hazard Tree Management Plan and Environmental Assessment. Completion is anticipated in January, 2007. Please continue reading for further information.



# United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Dinosaur National Monument  
4545 Highway 40  
Dinosaur, CO 81610



June 2, 2006

Dear Interested Party:

The National Park Service is in the initial stages of developing a Hazard Tree Management Plan for Dinosaur National Monument. Prior to preparing an Environmental Assessment, the National Park Service is seeking public comment to help identify issues associated with the proposed plan. It is the intention of the National Park Service to develop this plan by January 2006.

Though riparian habitat is scarce, just two-three percent of the western landscape, eighty percent of bird species, eighty percent of mammals, seventy-two percent of reptiles, and seventy-seven percent of amphibians that occur regularly on the Colorado Plateau use riparian habitat for food, water, cover, or migration routes. Riparian areas have always been important for people also; but in years past, the significance of riparian habitat to wildlife was not understood. One of the results of this lack of understanding is that all of Dinosaur's campgrounds and campsites are located in the riparian corridor. Native riparian trees such as cottonwoods are subject to rot and disease, which can create a hazardous situation for visitors recreating in campgrounds. Some hazard limbs and trees are being cut to provide for visitor safety. Unfortunately, these actions may negatively impact wildlife dependent on these trees. The Monument understands the importance of this habitat for wildlife and wants to protect riparian forest for the species that depend upon it for survival while still maintaining the opportunity for visitors to safely utilize campgrounds and campsites. The proposed plan will assist the park to manage hazard trees in an ecologically friendly way, while still providing quality visitor services.

We welcome your comments and concerns regarding the management of hazard trees as we begin to develop this plan. Enclosed is a briefing statement that further details the direction and scope this effort include. Comments on this initial stage of development must be received in writing by close of business on July 5, 2006, and should be sent to Superintendent, Dinosaur National Monument, 4545 E. Highway 40, Dinosaur, Colorado 81610; by fax to (970) 374-3003; or by email to [DINO\\_Superintendent@nps.gov](mailto:DINO_Superintendent@nps.gov).

For questions or comments regarding the scoping process or proposed plan, please contact Cindy Heyd, Natural Resources Program Manager, at (970) 374-2501 ext. 5.

Sincerely,

Mary Risser  
Superintendent

enclosure

# BRIEFING STATEMENT

Prepared by  
Cindy Heyd, Natural Resources Program Manager  
NPS- Dinosaur National Monument  
March 22, 2006

Subject: Notice of Intent to Prepare a Hazard Tree Management Plan and Environmental Assessment – Invitation to Participate

## **What is the Hazard Tree Management Plan?**

The Hazard Tree Management Plan will outline a long-term, comprehensive program for managing hazard trees within Dinosaur National Monument. The plan will address identification of hazard trees, options for identified hazard trees, and management strategies to treat hazard trees in different management zones and designated use areas within the monument.

## **Why is the plan needed?**

A hazard tree management plan is needed to address the complicated factors involved with hazard trees at Dinosaur National Monument, including compliance with federal laws and regulations, NPS management policies, resource concerns, and visitor safety.

Despite the relative scarcity of riparian habitat, particularly riparian forest, these habitat types are highly important for wildlife species. For example, eighty percent of birds that occur on the Colorado Plateau use riparian habitat for food, water, cover, or migration routes. The regulated flows of the Green River, a result of the Flaming Gorge Dam, have compounded the problem: cottonwood galleries are no longer able to regenerate on the Green River above the confluence with the Yampa River. This situation makes existing cottonwood stands even more important for wildlife species dependent upon them for survival.

Dinosaur campgrounds and other facilities are located within the riparian corridor of the Yampa and Green Rivers or their tributaries. When locations for these facilities were chosen, the importance of riparian habitat to wildlife was not well understood. At the present time, the Monument does understand the importance of riparian habitat for wildlife and seeks to maintain the natural value and function of this habitat to the extent possible while still maintaining visitor services such as safety, aesthetics, and shade in the existing facilities. Due to the size, age, and condition of cottonwoods and box elders in designated visitor areas, concerns for visitor and employee safety have increased as a result of falling limbs or hazardous trees.

## **Goals of the Plan**

The goals of the Hazardous Tree Management Plan are to:

- Determine management actions of hazard trees by management zone and designated areas.
- Maintain visitor and employee safety to the appropriate level as determined by development zone and designated use.

- Maintain, to the extent possible the value and function of riparian forest and individual hazard trees for wildlife species.
- Comply with federal laws, regulations, and NPS policies.
- Establish decision-making tools, methods to identify hazard trees, and treatment options based on management zones and designated uses.

## **Proposed Actions**

### **1. Identify appropriate actions for the different management zones and designated use areas.**

*Describes reasoning for decisions about what actions are appropriate for the different management zones, natural, cultural, development, and special use and other designated use areas within the management zones.*

### **2. Establish methods to identify hazard trees.**

*Describes the methods that will be used to identify hazard trees in management zones where treatment would be appropriate.*

### **3. Establish a decision making tool to decide a course of action for identified hazard trees.**

*Describes how decisions will be made to determine the course of action for individual hazard trees in the different management zones and designated use areas.*

### **4. Identify methods to maintain or replace the value and function of riparian trees and forest while providing for visitor safety and enjoyment of facilities located within riparian habitat.**

*Describes methods, such as planting new trees, replacing trees, and identifying ways to reduce human impacts to existing trees.*

### **5. Educate visitors and staff about hazard trees.**

*Monument will develop methods to communicate issues regarding hazard trees, such as the importance of riparian habitat to wildlife, aesthetic values, and visitor safety to visitors and staff alike.*

## **Suggested Alternatives**

**Alternative I:** *Continuation of Current Management Practices – cut hazard limbs or trees down as they become a known hazard in developed areas by contracting work to local tree removal company.*

Dinosaur National Monument has used this method in the past to remove hazardous limbs or trees to provide for visitor safety. This method is based on a reactive process that occurs when a hazardous limb falls in a location where visitors could be.

If this alternative is selected, Dinosaur National Monument would continue to hire a contractor to come and trim trees at three to five year intervals as it has been doing.

**Alternative II:** *Preferred Alternative – A comprehensive approach to manage hazard trees, including activities to address visitor safety, aesthetics, wildlife needs, cumulative effects of management actions, and educating park visitors and staff.*

The preferred alternative would consider a comprehensive approach to proactively manage hazard trees. This would include activities to address visitor safety, wildlife needs, cumulative effects of actions, mitigation, reducing negative effects of visitors on existing trees, and educating visitors and staff alike about hazard trees. This alternative would address hazard trees in developed zones, river campsites, cultural sites, etc. Using this more comprehensive alternative would reduce the negative impacts that management activities have on wildlife and the natural functions of the riparian trees and forest.

### **Alternatives Excluded from Further Consideration**

**Alternative III:** *No hazard tree management or control.*

This alternative was excluded from further consideration because it does not meet the requirements of the park's enabling legislation to protect natural resources, the NPS Organic Act, NPS Management Policies, or compliance with NEPA.

### **Anticipated Timelines**

### **Public Participation**

We invite your participation and appreciate your interest in the development of this plan. An outline of suggested alternatives has been prepared. These will evolve and change as we progress with the planning process and receive input from stakeholders and other interested parties.

### **Contact Information**

Comments and questions regarding Dinosaur National Monument's Hazard Tree Management Plan are welcome. Please contact:

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